

U.S. Small Business Administration



Doing Business with the Federal Government: A Twelve Step Program for Success

Dealing with the Federal Government can seem like a formidable task at times. However, with a little patience, persistence and perseverance on your part -- your efforts will be rewarded in the long run. To assist you, we developed a series of procedural steps essential for success. Good Luck!

1. Become familiar with the SBA/GC Internet Homepage.

The SBA offers a wide array of programs and “hands-on” assistance to small businesses considering the federal marketplace. Go to our website at <http://www.sba.gov/businessop/index.html> and familiarize yourself with the programs and services we offer. From this site you can identify local SBA contracting experts who can be an invaluable resource to you, whether you are new to government contracting or are currently doing business with the Government and are seeking advice on how to deal with a particular issue. From the “Resources and Opportunities” section on our website, you will find links to additional procurement-related programs and assistance. In addition, this site provides information about other SBA resources including Small Business Development Centers, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and Women’s Business Development Centers. Log onto the SBA/GC website today and find out why we believe that it is truly the entrance ramp to the Government’s procurement Super-Highway.

2. Determine if your firm qualifies for one of SBA’s Certification Programs.

Formal certification by small business concerns is not required to bid on Federal contracts. Firms self-certify that they are small at the time of bid/proposal submission. The SBA currently has two contracts-related certification programs. Our 8(a) Business Development program assists eligible small businesses to compete through business development assistance. Although primarily a business development program, there are certain contracts restricted to certified 8(a) concerns. Certification in our Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Program entitles qualified firms to special bidding benefits in the Federal contracting arena.

The SBA offers an on-line application process that makes it easier, faster and less expensive for small firms to apply for 8(a) Business Development and HUBZone certification directly from SBA’s website, eliminating the need to download and complete a “paper” application. The applications are 100% Web-based, which incorporates context sensitive help, real-time validation, printer-ready versions and integrates with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database. To learn more about these programs and to determine if your firm qualifies for 8(a) or HUBZone certification go to the appropriate SBA website:

<http://www.sba.gov/8abd>
<http://www.sba.gov/hubzone>

Although not a formal certification program, in May 2004, the SBA announced a new procurement program that will boost federal contract opportunities for service-disabled veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) concerns. Under the new rule contracting officers may restrict contract awards to SDVOSBs where there is a reasonable expectation that two or more SDVOSB concerns will submit bids at a fair market price. If the anticipated contract price will not exceed \$3.5 million (or \$5.5 million for manufacturing contracts) the new rules allow for a sole-source award, if there is not a reasonable expectation of competitive bids/offers from two or more SDVOSB concerns. The rule allows SDVOSB concerns to self-certify. Any challenge to a concern's status as a small business or as a SVOSB must be referred to the SBA for resolution.

3. Obtain a DUNS Number, and register in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) System.

If you do not already have a "DUNS Number," contact Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) at <http://www.dnb.com/> to obtain one. Your DUNS Number is an important "identifier", used for a multitude of purposes by the Government in the contracting arena.

The Government's Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database holds information relevant to procurement and financial transactions. CCR affords you the opportunity for fast electronic payment of your invoices. You must be registered in CCR to be awarded a Federal contract. To learn more about CCR log onto the website at <http://www.ccr.gov>

On January 1, 2004, the SBA's Procurement and Marketing Access Network (PRO-Net) was integrated into CCR to provide a single portal to assist small businesses with marketing their goods and services to the Federal government. The CCR-PRO-Net linkage is part of a comprehensive strategy to transfer PRO-Net's functions to the E-Gov Business Partner Network (BPN) in order to simplify government-wide vendor registration. The BPN is part of the Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE), one of the e-government initiatives to create integrated business processes for buyers and sellers in the federal marketplace. For more information about IAE, visit the website at <http://egov.gsa.gov>

Effective April 2005, CCR made changes to firm's Trading Partner Profile (TPP) to display a firm's small business size status according to each NAICs code listed (CCR will use 2002 NAICs codes), based on the firm's inputted revenue and/or employee size information. The SBA's small business size logic will populate fields indicating if a firm is certified as an 8(a) Business Development or historically underutilized business zone (HUBZone) program participant. Questions concerning your CCR registration should be directed to the CCR Assistance Center, by e-mail at: <http://www.ccr.gov/ContactCCR.aspx> or by phone at 1-888-227-2423.

The Government has implemented the Online Certifications and Representations Application (ORCA) initiative to replace the paper based representations and certifications (more commonly referred to as "reps and certs") process required with the submission of each sealed bid (IFB) or request for proposal (RFP). Now using ORCA, a prospective contractor can enter their reps and certs information over the web once and will then be able to submit them electronically from the web. This is a mandatory requirement and firms must review/update their data at least once annually or as circumstances change. The ORCA website can be found by going to <http://www.bpn.gov> and clicking on "Online Reps and Certs" on the left side of the screen.

The SBA manages the Business.gov website which has a search engine that can find forms, such as wage and tax statements by their identifying number, or by keywords, in a

database of 5,400 documents. Federal forms used by companies are only a click away at <http://www.business.gov>.

4. Identify your product or service.

It is helpful to know the Federal Supply Classification Code (FSC) and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code for your product or service. Many government product/service listings and future procurements are identified by NAICS code or FSC. To identify FSCs applicable to your company's product or service offerings, log onto www.dlis.dla.mil/h2. Detailed information regarding NAICS can be found on the SBA website by clicking onto:

<http://www.sba.gov/services/contractingopportunities/sizestandardtopics/naics/index.html>. **NOTE:** Small Business Size Standards for all Federal Government programs

formerly associated with Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes were replaced by those that SBA has established for industries as described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). SBA has established a new table of small business size standards based on NAICS.

<http://www.sba.gov/services/contractingopportunities/sizestandardtopics/tableofsizes/index.html>

5. Identify current Federal procurement opportunities.

Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) <http://www.fedbizopps.gov/> – the designated government-wide point of entry – is the exclusive official source for public access to notices of Federal contracting actions over \$25,000. (Agencies are encouraged to use FedBizOpps to provide notices for actions of \$25,000 or less). Notices of proposed procurements were formerly publicized in the Commerce Business Daily (CBD). However, with FedBizOpps designation as the one-stop Internet gateway to procurement opportunities, the CBD has ceased publication. Once you identify those Agencies and buying offices that purchase your products and services, it's a good idea to contact them directly to learn more about upcoming procurements (i.e., procurement forecasts) posted on websites or electronic bulletin boards.

The Department of Defense website has links for small business opportunities in Iraq. Go to <http://www.acq.osd.mil/osbp/news/iraq.htm> for additional information.

The Government is encouraging agencies to utilize environmentally-friendly oriented products and services (Buy Green). To learn more about the Government's Buy Green/Comprehensive Procurement Guideline, log onto <http://www.epa.gov/cpg>.

6. Familiarize yourself with the Government's contracting procedures.

Be familiar with Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) <http://www.acqnet.gov/far> and the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/>. You can also get access to other Federal agency FAR supplements from their respective web pages.

7. Investigate Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contracts.

The General Services Administration (GSA) manages Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) contracts, also known as Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contracts. Under MAS/FSS, contracts are awarded to multiple companies supplying comparable products and services at pre-negotiated prices, terms and conditions. Once GSA awards the contracts, Federal contracting officers and other authorized users may place orders directly with GSA Schedule contractor. Many Federal purchases are, in fact, orders on MAS/FSS contracts.

Contact the General Services Administration (GSA) for information on how to obtain a MAS/FSS contract: <http://www.fss.gsa.gov/>. (Be sure that your marketing information and CCR profile contains information on any MAS/FSS contracts held by your firm).

8. Seek additional assistance as needed in the Federal marketplace.

There are a number of important resources that are available to provide you with “hands-on” assistance in the Federal marketplace:

-Procurement Technical Assistance Centers are located in most States. Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, while funded by the Department of Defense, provide technical contracting and marketing assistance to small businesses wishing to do business with any federal agencies. They provide training and counseling on marketing, financial, and contracting issues at minimal or no cost. In Minnesota, the Procurement Technical Assistance Center’s website is located at: www.ptac-meda.net

-Commercial Marketing Representatives (CMRs) SBA has a nationwide cadre of procurement professionals who are charged with assisting small businesses and acting as their advocates at both the prime and subcontracting levels. CMRs work with those small firms interested in identifying subcontracting opportunities with large businesses that have been awarded a Federal contract. To identify the CMR located nearest to you go to http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/contacts/gc_cm.html.

-Small Business Specialists are located at each Federal buying office and can provide assistance on how to market to that Agency. An addendum to this document contains a listing of Small Business Specialists (sometimes referred to as SADBUS) in your state. A complete listing of Small Business Specialists can be obtained from each Agency’s website. For example, links to the homepages of every DOD activity can be found on the **DefenseLink website**: <http://www.defenselink.mil/>. This information can be invaluable in researching the Federal marketplace and identifying your target market. Links to **Agency Procurement Forecasts**

(http://www.acqnet.gov/comp/procurement_forecasts/index.html) and other program information are available on their individual websites.

-Directors of Federal Agency Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)/Directors of the Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) for Defense agencies, are in place at the headquarters level of each Federal agency and department. They are responsible for ensuring that small businesses are afforded an equitable opportunity to compete for their agency’s/department’s prime contracting opportunities. The OSDBU Directors have formed an Interagency Council which meets regularly to, among other functions, identify procurement practices that will enhance small business participation for the Government’s procurement opportunities. A listing of each of the OSDBU directors can be found at: <http://www.osdbu.gov/>.

9. Explore subcontracting opportunities.

Regardless of your product or service it is important that you do not neglect our very large secondary market, Subcontracting Opportunities with Federal Prime Contractors. Be sure to check out our website at

http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/contacts/gc_subcontracts_opportunities.html. The SBA/GC Subcontracting Opportunities Directory lists, by State, large business Federal prime contractors along with the name and telephone number of each firm’s Small Business Liaison Officer (SBLO). We encourage you to investigate potential opportunities with these firms. Many of these firms also have websites that may be useful and we encourage you to contact their respective SBLO for subcontracting and teaming

opportunities. The SBA's SUB-Net <http://web.sba.gov/subnet> is a valuable source for obtaining information on subcontracting opportunities.

10. Investigate other Federal programs.

There are several other programs that may be of interest to you, such as individual Agency Mentor-Protégé Programs, the SBA's Small Business Innovation Research Program <http://www.sba.gov/sbir/indexsbir-sttr.html>, etc. Information on these and other programs is available on Agency websites. A listing of some useful websites can be found at: <http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/resources/index.html>.

11. Accept credit cards.

More than 250,000 Federal employees are using the GSA Smartpay cards. As a vendor you can maximize your ability to capture government sales by accepting credit cards (Visa, MasterCard and Voyager). If you already accept these cards, you have no additional work to do. If you do not accept these cards contact a bank to establish a merchant account. For more information, visit GSA's website at <http://www.gsa-smartpay.com/>.

12. Market, Market, Market!

The three most important words to remember in order to be successful in the Federal Procurement Arena is market, market, market. Hopefully, this guide will have given you some good ideas on how to market your firm. After you have identified your customers, researched their requirements, and familiarized yourself with the Government's procurement regulations and strategies, it is time to market your product or service. Present your capabilities directly to those buying offices that purchase your products or services. Realize that, like you, their time is valuable and if the match is a good one and you can provide them with a cost-effective, quality solution to their requirements the contract could be yours. It is also a good idea to attend Government matchmaking and networking events such as the SADBOK Government Procurement Fair to be held April 28, 2010 at the Earle Brown Center in Brooklyn Center.

Good luck and remember – you're not alone